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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, August 16, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "VITAMIN C." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S.
Department of Agriculture.

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One of the nicest things about summer is the wide choice of fruits and vegetables--either in your own garden or on the market. Even if you don't "grow your own," the price is very low when you buy them. And have you ever stopped to think how well these fresh fruits and vegetables take care of your day's need for vitamin C?

During the winter you have to depend on orange juice or tomato juice to get the vitamin C you need each day. But during the summer, most of the fruits and vegetables in season are good sources of this vitamin.

For example, the Federal Bureau of Home Economics reports that most of the summer vegetables are high on the list of foods rich in vitamin C. In particular the home economists name new cabbage--green lima beans--green peas--corn--kohlrabi--summer squash--and all the green leafy vegetables. And, of course, tomatoes-- which are probably the top ranking summer vegetable.

Several of the summer fruits are also rich in vitamin C. Cantaloup and raspberries are especially good. And even watermelon--although it would probably be a favorite, whether it contained any food values or not. And lemonade--which is such a popular hot weather beverage--also furnishes vitamin C.

In fact, there doesn't seem to be any excuse for a shortage of the vitamin as long as you can get all these fruits and vegetables at such a reasonable price. But vitamin C is one of those will-o-the-wisps that has to be handled carefully. So it isn't enough just to buy foods that contain vitamin C--you must also cook them correctly in order to save the vitamin.

But no matter how carefully you cook foods, you're bound to lose some vitamin C. So the nutritionists suggest that you use raw fruits and vegetables whenever you can. When you must cook vegetables--be sure to cook them the right way.

And here are the rules that the experts in the Bureau of Home Economics give for cooking vegetables. First of all, be sure to use as little water as possible, and to serve this cooking water along with the vegetables. Some cooks make the mistake of throwing away vitamin C, because they don't realize that it dissolves in the cooking water.

Another mistake is to cook vegetables too long. Every minute that you cook vegetables, you're destroying some vitamin C. So it's wasteful to continue this cooking after the vegetables are tender enough to eat.

And don't add soda to the cooking water--if you want to save the vitamin C. You may have an old fashioned cook book that recommends a pinch of soda as a special trick for keeping vegetables a bright green color. But today we know that soda will increase the destruction of vitamin C.

Vegetables also lose some vitamin C, simply by being left open to the air--especially when they are cut. So it's best to wait until just before serving time to shred cabbage or dice fruits.

If you use frozen foods, you have a special problem in saving vitamin C--because the vitamin is lost very quickly after the foods have thawed. It's best to cook frozen vegetables without thawing. And if you're using frozen fruits without cooking--plan to serve them as soon as they are thawed.

That's the very latest information on where to get vitamin C, and how to save it in cooking. Now let's take a little time to see why vitamin C is so important in the body.

Perhaps the best way to understand what vitamin C does--is to see what happens when a person doesn't get enough vitamin C. A person who doesn't get enough foods

containing vitamin C soon becomes run down, and he vaguely feels that there is something wrong with his health. Then if he continues on a diet low in vitamin C he doesn't care much about eating and he loses weight--he becomes tired very easily and often suffers from painful joints.

The oldtime sailors and explorers, who were without vitamin C foods for long periods of time, suffered from the disease called scurvy. We don't hear much about this disease today--but there are many persons who might have better health if their diets included more vitamin C. For these borderline cases....nutritionists recommend more fresh fruits and vegetables as long as they are in season--with citrus fruits and canned tomatoes to supply vitamin C during the winter.

One reason why vitamin C is such a problem in our diets, is that we need supplies of it every day--because it cannot be stored in the body. Even tiny babies need vitamin C. That's why doctors recommend orange juice or canned tomato juice as one of the first foods to be added to a baby's diet. And by the time a child is 3 or 4 years old--he should be getting almost as much vitamin C as an adult.

An expectant mother or a mother who is nursing her baby needs extra amounts of the vitamin. Grandmother and grandfather, too, must be sure to get enough vitamin C.

It seems easy to get enough vitamin C--with so many foods rich in this food value. And most families do get some foods that furnish vitamin C. But a recent survey of city family diets--made by the Federal Bureau of Home Economics--showed that many of the families studied were not getting enough vitamin C for the very best of health.

